**Stocking the Library Stacks**

**KATHRYN GANFIELD**

[**ul5097yl@metrostate.edu**](mailto:ul5097yl@metrostate.edu)

New books with shiny covers and crisp pages sit on shelves near the Metropolitan State library’s second floor circulation desk. Recent acquisitions include the children’s picture book “Hungry Johnny” and the agricultural policy book “The Politics of Food Supply.” How do these new materials get added to the library’s collection?

Assistant Professor Becca Peters has the answer. She has served as Metro State’s cataloging and acquisitions librarian since 2015.

“We’re not like the public library system, where they try to anticipate people’s needs and buy ahead. We work more on an ‘as needed,’ responsive basis,” Peters said.

To develop the library’s collection, Peters works with seven “liaison librarians.” They are assigned to academic departments across the university to support faculty research and materials requests.

Many ideas for new materials come from the liaison librarians. “They’re reading book reviews. They look at recommended and well-reviewed texts. The liaisons listen to faculty and take that all into account,” Peters said.

**Make a Request**

If a faculty member or student can’t find a needed item in the library catalog—or wants a newly-published book—they can submit a request through the “Suggest a Purchase” link on the library’s homepage (<http://libguides.metrostate.edu/purchase>).

“We fulfill almost all materials requests, though cost is a thing, of course,” Peters said. Recently she had to turn down a request for an out-of-print Russian language book that Amazon was selling for $2,000. “I had to say, ‘I’m not buying that—sorry.” There are financial limitations, though that’s the far end of the spectrum of requests,” she said.

Compared to large university libraries with over a million items on their shelves, “our print collection is a little bit smaller, in the 40-50,000 range,” Peters said. She noted that since its founding, Metro State has never sought to build a giant library collection. “The idea has always been to look outward to other libraries and use their resources,” she said.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) gives students and faculty broad access to materials from other academic, public and government libraries across Minnesota and the United States. Books and DVDs requested through ILL will arrive within 5-14 days for pickup at the St. Paul campus. Academic journal articles are sent to a university email account within 3-5 days.

**Read On Screen**

But the most popular materials at Metro State’s library can’t be found on the shelves—they’re on students’ screens. “Our emphasis here at Metro, because we’re spread out over the four campus locations, tends to be more electronic books,” Peters said, with the librarians realizing that “a lot of students are working adults who can’t come [to the library]. We try to make it more accessible,” she added.

Metro State offers three main electronic book collections: ProQuest Ebook Central, Project MUSE and Ebooks Minnesota. Students can search and view electronic books on computers, tablets or mobile phones—or download them for offline reading.

To help improve the library’s eBook selection, students are encouraged to complete a brief survey at <http://libguides.metrostate.edu/ebooksurvey2017>.

**Much More Than Books**

The library also offers streaming of academic films and videos via the services “Films on Demand” and “Kanopy Streaming.” A StarID login is required. Notable titles include Ken Burns’ “The Roosevelts, An Intimate History,” and the Swedish film trilogy “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.” Between the two services, students can view over 50,000 documentaries and movies. The library also houses a DVD collection of more than 4,000 films. It includes recent releases like the feature film “Dear White People,” and season 2 of the Netflix series “Orange is the New Black.”

For Broadway fans, the library’s 1,800-item audio recording holdings include the Varner Musical Theater collection. Available soundtracks include “The Color Purple: A New Musical” and “Irving Berlin’s White Christmas.”

Education majors (or parents) will want to explore the diverse curriculum collection. It includes lauded children’s picture books like “Last Stop on Market Street” by Matt de la Peña (winner of the 2016 Newbery Medal), and young adult books like “Being Jazz: My Life as a Transgender Teen.” A variety of teaching aids like puzzles, puppets and educational games are also available for checkout.

For Game Night (held in the library on the third Tuesday of each month) and for study breaks, students can check out an array of board games like “Scrabble,” “Apples to Apples” and “Settlers of Catan.”

**See Something Special**

Behind glass walls in room 205, the library maintains archives and special collections (ASC). The archives contain documents related to the founding and growth of the university, including the papers of Metro State’s first three presidents. Access is by appointment only. A video tutorial on how to use the archives and a database of its contents can be found at <http://metrostate.libraryhost.com/>.

The writings of Metro State faculty also enhance the library’s collection. “We purchase two copies whenever a faculty member publishes something—one copy for special collections and one as an e-book or for the circulating collection,” Peters said. Recent additions include “Business Ethics and the Pragmatic Pursuit of the Good” by Francis Schweigert, interim dean of the College of Community Studies, and “Tell Me a Tattoo Story,” a picture book by creative writing professor Alison McGhee.

Special collections materials also come from donations. “We do accept gifts,” Peters said. “The liaison librarians in that subject area would look at them to see if it duplicates something we have, look at age of material, and ask if it supports programs we have?”

**Foreseeing the Future**

Now into its second decade in its current space, the library still has some empty shelves on the second floor for new print, audio and video materials. “We haven’t had to ‘weed’ [remove items] from the main collection since the library opened in 2004. For the reference collection, we are always checking for age, relevancy, if some things are dated and just plain incorrect,” Peters said.

The catalog of e-books will continue to grow as well. “Technology is something a lot of libraries think is important.” she said. “It’s a part of being a librarian, to know and use all the available tools.”

Peters also noted the work of the library’s social media committee to “be where students are,” by having a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. “We want there to be many ways to interact with the library,” she said.

The web committee used Google analytics and user experience (UX) to guide the recent changes to the library website. As Peters put it, “We did a lot of work internally to see how students want to search, and the main things they’re looking for. On our main home page, some of the changes we’ve made were a result of that.”

Peters said the contents and services of the library will continue to be “responsive to what the university wants us and needs us to be. We are always looking for new things that we can incorporate money-wise and time-wise.”